

what we are going to do to get away from this mindset of the Government supplying the income to the farmers—that is the heart of what the problem is—and get to the mindset of how do we get the prices up at the farm gate, this is where the administration's proposal falls short. I am hopeful as we move ahead we can convince the administration to get off of that mindset, to provide for perhaps some increased loan rates for farmers, to provide for storage payments to farmers, and to provide for a shorter-term paid set-aside program. Again, as the administration said in their proposal:

Rising crop surpluses, continued low prices, and declining incomes will contribute to increasing farm financial stress in 2000, indicating a need for further Federal assistance.

We have to get off of that mindset. We have rising surpluses. Well, let's get them down and provide for the kind of programs that will get the surpluses down. Continued low prices—get those low prices back up at the farm gate—that is the mindset we have to get on, and I hope we can take the good things in the proposal, but get to the heart and soul of it, which is getting farm income up—not from Government payments, but from the prices farmers receive for their products. That is what we have to do.

I see my friend from Minnesota is here to speak on this. Again, we have talked about this, and we share the same strong feelings that this is not adequate, this needs some additional work in the Congress. I hope we can get the administration to help us on that.

I yield the floor.

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, I say to the Senator from Iowa—and I see the Senator from Oregon—I want to come out on the floor next week with some other Senators from farm country, and I think we should talk more about it. As I understand the Senator from Iowa—and he can correct me if I am wrong—it is that we don't want to wait until 2002 for a new farm bill. We want to reopen this farm bill and give our farmers some leverage so they can get a decent price.

What we are doing is essentially saying to these grain companies and to these packers: Go ahead. You can get by with not having to worry about paying producers as little as possible because you have all the power of the marketplace. Then they will have enough money to support their families. Then we come in and provide them with some money so they can support their families. We are basically subsidizing these big grain companies and these packers. We are not getting to the root of the problem. If it is a farmer-owned reserve we are talking about, CRP, mid-size and family farmers, that is what people want. Zeroing in on mid-size farmers is what people want. They want to be able to make a decent price.

Isn't that really what the Senator from Iowa was saying?

This will be on my time.

Mr. HARKIN. It is exactly what we are talking about. I point out that in the administration's proposal for their farm support this year, they will use a 5-year average of gross income—gross income. Look, what about the increased price of fuel, machinery, fertilizer, seed, and, thanks to the Federal Reserve System, increased interest rates? I said before and I say to my friend again that the farmer has a \$100,000 gross income averaged over 5 years. But if his costs are \$92,000, what does that mean? It doesn't mean anything.

Mr. WELLSTONE. I say to my colleague from Iowa the other thing which worries me is we had an estimate the other day by the USDA that net farm income was going to go down 17 percent this year. As I look at their figure for some sort of income support, it isn't going to be enough to provide even a safety net. But the point is it doesn't deal with the root causes.

Let's have some fight. Let's say this farm bill is a miserable failure. Let's have some antitrust action. Let's have a level playing field. Let's give our farmers some leverage so they can get a decent price in the marketplace.

I think there are a number of us who are going to come out on the floor with just those proposals.

Am I correct?

Mr. HARKIN. The Senator is absolutely correct. I look forward to working with him and others to set forth proposals that will move us in the right direction.

Mr. WELLSTONE. I will make one final point, I say to the Senator from Oregon. It looks to me as if—I think it is going to happen—the religious community, the AFL-CIO, the farm organizations, and the environmental organizations are all beginning to organize for March 20-21. Basically, rural America is coming here to raise the roof. I think it will be healthy for all of us.

I think the pressure should be put on dealing with the price crisis and dealing with other issues that are important to rural America, which for too long have been out of sight and out of mind. I think we have to get off the dime. We have to make a difference.

Mr. President, I want to reinforce what my colleague from Iowa said. I think what the President and the administration suggested for family farmers is too timid. Where is the fight? I appreciate getting some help to people—sort of safety-net help. Getting some income to our family farmers is not going to be enough. It doesn't deal with the root of the problem. We don't want to wait until 2002 to write a farm bill. It is a failed farm bill. It is a failed farm policy. We are grinding family farmers up into pieces. We are driving people off the land. It is an economic convulsion, and it calls for bold action.

I don't know where the fight is. To tell you the truth, I don't see the fight. I say to the Senator from Iowa that we have different positions in the Presidential race. This has nothing to do with who we are supporting.

But where is the fight? Where is the boldness? Where is the leadership? We need people—starting with the President—to come out and say this “freedom to fail” bill has not worked. There is tremendous economic pain. Time is not on our side. There is an economic convulsion out there. Family farmers in rural communities want a decent price. We want farmers to get a fair shake in the market. We want antitrust action. We want a fair trade policy. We want stable agriculture. We want a different farm policy. In all due respect, this proposal will only help people somewhat. Thank you. But we have to do a lot more.

Mr. HARKIN. Will the Senator yield on that?

Mr. WELLSTONE. I am pleased to yield.

Mr. HARKIN. We have to get away from thinking that agriculture is some sort of a minor entity out there, some kind of a sidebar issue. Agriculture is still, if I am not mistaken, something like 20 percent of our gross national product. I think we are up from 20 percent, if I am not mistaken. People still have to eat. Food is one thing we can't do without. Yet we sort of treat agriculture as sort of—well, it is sort of a sidebar, sort of a side item. We have to think of agriculture as a central, integral part of our entire economic structure in America.

Mr. WELLSTONE. I thank my colleague.

SECURITY FOR CAPITOL HILL

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, I want to repeat what I said yesterday. I am going to come out on the floor every day and spend a few minutes on this question.

Many of us attended the services for Officer Chestnut and Agent Gibson, the two officers who were slain. I believe we all made a commitment to making sure that we were going to have security for our police officers, much less for the general public.

Starting back in October, I realized we have a single-person post. We have posts—I say to my colleague from Oregon, who has always cared about these questions—where you have one officer with lots of people streaming in. This is unconscionable. It puts these officers at great risk. It puts all of us at great risk. You could have one deranged person who could show up at any of these stations with other people coming in, and God knows what would happen.

After these two police officers were slain, we passed a supplemental appropriations bill that was a little over \$1 million. It was to go for weapons, investigations, security, and if we needed

more overtime so we could staff these stations through overtime. The Sergeant at Arms of the Senate has made it crystal clear we have to change this situation. I have talked to him. I told him I was going to speak on the floor. He said: Please do so.

I am not going to point my finger and say this particular person or that particular person is at fault. I am just going to say this: We should be able to do better for these Capitol Hill police officers. They do well for us.

We made a commitment that we would not put them in a situation where we did not have real security. We are doing that.

We still have single-person posts. I raised this question back in October before we adjourned. I was told there would be changes. But we still have not put the resources into this. I say to my colleagues if this is an issue of spending and we need to spend more money and we need to have more police officers, then let's do it. If this is some sort of an internal issue where we somehow need to figure out how to use overtime pay to staff up, then let's do it.

I don't know what the policy answer is. I will leave that up to other people. I am not going to be the one to micro-manage. But I will say this as a Senator: Every day I am going to come out on the floor, and every day I am going to say we lost two police officers; that we made a commitment in their memory to make sure we would have security; we made a commitment to make sure that we would not have single-person posts. That was a promise we made. We have still not lived up to that promise. We should do better. We should do better for the Capitol Hill police. We should do better for the general public. The sooner we do, the better.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. WYDEN. Thank you, Mr. President.

I want to tell the Senator from Minnesota how much I appreciate him speaking up for the Capitol Hill police officers. When we think about the many people in this country who are decent and caring, right up at the top of the list are those folks who serve this country as Capitol Hill police officers. I commend the Senator for his persistence in being willing to speak up for those folks day after day. I will find time to come out and join him.

Mr. WELLSTONE. I thank the Senator from Oregon.

PRESCRIPTION DRUG COVERAGE FOR SENIOR CITIZENS

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President and colleagues, I have made it clear my top priority for this session of Congress is to make sure that we finally add pre-

scription drug coverage for senior citizens to the Medicare program.

Towards that end, I have teamed up for more than a year with Senator OLYMPIA SNOWE of Maine with a proposal we believe can win bipartisan support in this Congress and effectively respond to the enormous need that all of us are seeing as we go home to our communities and visit with older people. The Snowe-Wyden prescription drug legislation is bipartisan. It is marketplace oriented—we use competitive forces as a tool to hold down the prescription drug bills for senior citizens. All of us in the Senate can identify with the approach we are using because the Snowe-Wyden legislation is modeled after the Federal Employee Health Benefit Plan which all of us in the Congress are fortunate to enjoy.

As part of our campaign to get this bipartisan legislation enacted, I have made a commitment to come to this floor again and again and urge senior citizens, as this poster says, to send in copies of their prescription drug bills. We would like seniors to send in copies of their bills to each of us in the Senate, Washington, DC 20510.

As part of the effort to win passage of this legislation or a similar approach to it, I am going to come to the floor of the Senate again and again and again and read from some of the letters I am receiving from older people.

For example, recently I had a chance to hear from an elderly woman who lives in Yoncalla, in southern Oregon. It is a small town. Her closest pharmacy is about 30 miles away. She has diabetes; she has osteoporosis. Her Social Security check, the entire source of her income, is \$567 a month. She is taking eight different medications for her health problems. Her monthly drug costs come to about \$400 a month. That leaves this elderly woman in southern Oregon with less than \$200 a month to live on after she is done paying her prescription drug bill. Think about that, think about what it is like for an older person in this country having just a couple hundred dollars a month to pay for food and heat or other medical expenses.

She told us she has had to basically cut back on buying her drugs on a monthly basis because she knows, unless she juggles all her bills, she is not going to be able to come close to meeting all of her obligations. She has \$567 a month, lives in a small town, Yoncalla, Oregon. The pharmacy is a pretty good distance away; she has diabetes; she has osteoporosis, and when she is done paying her prescription drug bill, she has only about \$200 a month left to live on. That is a disgrace. That is wrong in a country as rich and good and powerful as ours.

Under the Snowe-Wyden bipartisan prescription drug legislation, with a modest copayment that woman would be able to get health insurance to cover

her prescription drug bill. Our legislation would pick up essentially completely the prescription drug portion of her health insurance premium.

The reality is, a person such as that older woman in Yoncalla is hit by a double whammy. Medicare does not cover prescription drugs and hasn't since the program began in 1965; and, second, she is in effect subsidizing big buyers, health maintenance organizations, big health plans that go out and negotiate discounts. It is no wonder that very often we see older people in our communities in this situation. This story is representative. I am getting accounts similar to this continuously. In every community in this country there are similar people who are walking an economic tightrope, seniors who, every month, balance their food bill against their fuel costs, and fuel costs against medical expenses. If they have any unexpected expenses at all that month, they fall off the economic tightrope and go further and further into the hole.

Another older couple I heard from recently, this time from my hometown in Portland, told me they spend \$5,264 a year on medications. This older couple gets Social Security benefits. The husband has a veteran's pension. Between the various sources of income they have, they receive just under \$12,000 a year. They have to spend over \$5,000 of it on prescription medicines. I am not going to go into all the details of this, but they sent me an itemized bill of four pages that outlines the prescriptions they are paying for on a regular basis. Mr. President, \$5,000 a year of their \$12,000 income goes to pay for these medicines.

I think we can come up with a bipartisan approach to deal with this issue, one that is marketplace oriented. We have a good model in the Federal Employees Health Plan. Senator SNOWE and I are very proud that when we brought the funding plan for our legislation to the floor of the Senate as part of the budget last session we got 54 votes. A majority of the Senate is now on record in support of ensuring we fund prescription drug coverage for older people.

I was very pleased with how the President handled the prescription drug issue at the State of the Union Address. He made it clear he was not interested in scapegoating anybody or saying Republicans were at fault or somebody else was at fault for not getting this enacted. He made it clear he wanted to work with the U.S. Congress. He said the need is urgent. He left open the opportunity to work with Republicans and Democrats on the particulars. Senator SNOWE and I believe our approach is one that makes sense. We are proud of the fact we got the majority of the Senate on record voting for a funding approach for it.

But our colleagues have lots of other good ideas. We recognize that. Our bill